WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Price support for saffron crop

342. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that for the first time in four years, Kishtwar's saffron farmers are expecting a good saffron crop;

(b) if so, whether Government have noticed the fact that official neglect has hit the farmers' interests hard and they rarely get the attention and the prices they deserve; and

(c) if so, the efforts, Government propose to make the Government-run price support mechanism available for the benefit of such farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV) : (a) and (b) Saffron, which is a rainfed crop, is cultivated in an area of more than 60 hectares covering Pochhal, Matta, Hatta, Begana, Berabhatta, Cherhar, Hanjala, Sangramabhatta, Hidyal etc. in Kishtwar. In the year 2003, during the critical season of growth in the months of July-August, the rainfall was insufficient as a result of which 20-25% crop was damaged. It was due to adverse weather and not the official neglect that the crop did not bloom to the full.

(c) No request has so far been received for inclusion of saffron under the price support schemes, *viz.* Minimum Support Price (MSP) and the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS). This also reflects the fact that saffron, which is a high value crop, may not require any price support.

Assistance to Andhra Pradesh from NCCF

343. DR. ALLADI P. RAJUMAR : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Andhra Pradesh Assembly has passed a unanimous resolution requesting the Central Government to immediately release Rs. 96.12 crores from National Calamity Contingency Fund and 15 lakh tonnes of rice under the Swarna Jayanti Grameen Rozgar Yojana to meet the need of drought affected areas of the State; and

(b) if so, the response of the Central Government in this regard?